Background Paper

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# A REVIEW OF THE GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS ON STRATEGIC ARMS REDUCTIONS

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## INTRODUCTION

The United States and the Soviet Union began formal negotiations on the control of strategic arms in 1969. Negotiations have continued intermittently since that time. They have resulted so far in two agreements (SALT I and II) aimed at limiting the deployment of strategic offensive arms, and a treaty severely restricting the deployment of ballistic missile defences (the ABM Treaty).

The Interim Agreement on Strategic Offensive Arms (SALT I) was signed in 1972 by President Nixon and Secretary Brezhnev. Effectively, SALT I froze two categories of strategic delivery vehicles — intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), and submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBMs), although in the latter case the agreement provided for a certain increase in the number of Soviet SLBMs then deployed. The total number of such delivery vehicles permitted to the Soviets under SALT I was 2,347, whereas the US was permitted 1,710. The disparity reflected in part the technological superiority of US missiles, especially submarine-based, and in part the omission of strategic bombers (a category in which the US enjoyed a decisive advantage). It may also have implied a tacit recognition that the Soviets had to contend as well with British and French forces, and with US intermediate-range nuclear forces in and around Europe, none of which was accepted by the US as part of the SALT I calculations.

In November 1972, the two leaders also signed the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. This restricted both sides to the deployment of two operational ABM sites, a provision that was subsequently amended in 1974 to one site with 100 operational ABM launchers.

Immediately after the conclusion of the SALT I Agreement, negotiations began on a treaty to extend the strategic arms covered by the Interim Agreement, and to seek equal limits on the numbers deployed. In Vladivostok in 1974, President Ford and Secretary Brezhnev approved a framework for SALT II which imposed a ceiling of 2,400 to include heavy bombers, ICBMs and SLBMs.

Thereafter, progress in the negotiations slowed. Nevertheless, a second agreement was eventually reached, and signed by President Carter and Secretary Brezhnev in June 1979. The SALT II agreement was not ratified by the United States Senate, and did not formally enter into force. However, both the Carter and Reagan administrations (in the latter case until an announcement to the contrary in June 1986) undertook not to undercut SALT II. The Soviet Union also indicated that it would abide by the agreement.

SALT II established an overall ceiling of 2,400 for all strategic delivery vehicles, and a sub-ceiling of 1,320 for delivery vehicles carrying multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles (MIRVs). It also established detailed provisions for monitoring the Agreement, and for procedures to be followed in decommissioning launchers as a consequence of modernization.

After assuming office, President Reagan agreed not to undercut SALT II, but, both during the 1980 election campaign and after becoming President, he voiced continuing opposition to the agreement. Essentially, the President took the view that the Treaty permitted an excessive increase in the number of strategic **warheads** because the limits placed on the number of MIRVed **launchers** (1,320) allowed considerable scope for increasing the number of re-entry vehicles on each missile. More to the point, he claimed this omission worked to the benefit of the Soviet Union, which had developed much heavier launchers and possessed, therefore, a potential to greatly exceed the United States in the number of warheads deployed on 'heavy' land-based launchers such as the SS-18.

The SALT negotiations had envisaged a third round in which, building on the previous agreements, the two

sides would consider other issues, of which perhaps the most important was the status of intermediate-range nuclear launchers based in and around Europe. President Reagan, however, wanted not a third round of SALT, but a radically different approach. He called for deep reductions in strategic weapons, to include both launchers and warheads, to be discussed in a new forum entitled the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START). At the commencement of these talks, in June 1982, the United States tabled proposals calling for deep cuts in certain categories of strategic forces, but particularly in land-based ICBMs. This provision was aimed at the Soviet SS-18s, which, within the SALT limits, had been MIRVed with 10 warheads, and were believed to be a serious threat to the survivability of US land-based ICBMs.

Apart from the break with the SALT process, the START negotiations were soon complicated by two additional issues. The first concerned intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF), and the second the implications of the President's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).

In 1977 the Soviet Union began deploying a new missile targeted primarily on Western Europe. The SS-20 is a mobile, three-warhead launcher with a range of 5,000 kilometres. Although it replaced older and highly vulnerable Soviet missiles (the SS-4s and -5s), this qualitative improvement in Soviet forces led to considerable anxiety amongst the European NATO allies. As a consequence, and after protracted debates, in 1979 the North Atlantic Council approved a plan to deploy US Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs) as a counter to the SS-20s. The decision also stressed negotiation with the Soviet Union on intermediate-range forces. These negotiations began in 1981, but broke down in 1983 when, as threatened, the Soviet Union left the talks following the initial deployments of the Pershings and GLCMs.

Although the ABM Treaty is not strictly connected with SALT II, and even less with the START proposal, since 1983 the SDI research programme and related developments in anti-satellite technology have been viewed by the Soviets as directly linked to the negotiation of arms reductions. Specifically, the question of what research is permissible under the ABM Treaty, and the broader question of adherence to the Treaty, have become an integral part of the negotiations on strategic arms control.

When the two powers finally resumed discussions at Geneva in March 1985, therefore, they confronted a more comprehensive set of negotiating issues than had been faced in either of the preceding SALT negotiations. As a consequence, the Geneva negotiations are conducted in three groups: Strategic Forces, Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces, and Defence and Space Arms.

## I. STRATEGIC FORCES

Although the present round of Geneva negotiations adopted a new name when they began in March 1985 — the Nuclear and Space Arms Talks — in respect to strategic forces it effectively continued the START process initiated in June 1982. Together with the INF negotiations, these talks were broken off by the Soviets in December 1983, following the beginning of US deployments of Pershing II and GLCMs in Europe. At the time, relatively little attention was directed towards the proposals on strategic forces. When the present round of Geneva talks began in March 1985, therefore, the US negotiating position on strategic forces was essentially unchanged from the START negotiations.

At the core of the START negotiations lay the US claim that the Soviet Union enjoyed an overwhelming and destabilizing advantage in land-based ICBMs.

**Table 1 USSR and US Strategic Forces**

| USSR | Launchers | % of Total | Warheads | % of Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ICBM | 1,398 | 55% | 6,420 | 64% |
| SLBM | 983 | 39% | 3,159 | 32% |
| Bombers | 160 | 6% | 440 | 4% |
| | 2,541 | | 10,019 | |

| US | Launchers | % of Total | Warheads | % of Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ICBM | 1,005 | 52% | 2,175 | 19% |
| SLBM | 640 | 33% | 5,632 | 50% |
| Bombers | 278 | 15% | 3,554 | 31% |
| | 1,923 | | 11,361 | |

Sources: IISS, *Military Balance, 1986-87* and *World Armaments and Disarmament*: SIPRI Yearbook, 1986

As Table 1 indicates, the Soviet Union has developed its strategic forces with a heavy emphasis on land-based missiles, in contrast to the United States, which has emphasized a more balanced triad of forces in which land-based strategic warheads are only about one-fifth of the total force.

Preoccupied with the increasing accuracy and destructive power of Soviet ICBMs, particularly the SS-18s, in 1982 the United States proposed a reduction in strategic warheads to 5,000, with no more than 2,500 on land-based ICBMs. As can be seen from Table 1, this would have meant a much larger than 50% reduction in Soviet ICBM warheads, leaving the US free to keep all or any portion of its own ICBM warheads.

In response, the Soviets argued generally that the overall balance of strategic forces was essentially equal, and pointed to the US advantage in submarine and bomber forces which, they claimed, offset the larger numbers of Soviet land-based ICBMs. Their START proposal for reductions was much less dramatic than that of the US, calling for a reduction of 20% in the preponderance of their forces on land-based missiles.

In March 1985, at the beginning of the current round of talks, the US position was essentially unchanged from that of December 1983, while the Soviets offered little new in response to that position. However, in late September 1985, possibly reflecting the new style and priorities of Secretary-General Gorbachev, this desultory beginning changed dramatically when the Soviets tabled a proposal which, through various channels, was subsequently leaked to the US press and then confirmed by both Soviet and US officials. The main elements of the Soviet proposal were as follows:

- a 50% cut in strategic launchers on both sides
- a cut in warheads such that each side would retain only 6,000
- a sub-ceiling of 60% of strategic warheads (3,600) in any single leg of the triad
- a ban on SDI research and development
- a definition of 'strategic' (launchers which can hit the homeland of the other) which included the long-range theatre nuclear forces (LRTNF) of the United States but not those of the Soviet Union (since the latter cannot normally reach the United States)
- a ban on modernization possibly so defined for negotiating purposes as to allow the Soviets to continue deployments of SS-24 and SS-25 ICBMs, and the SS-N-20 SLBM, but which might not have allowed any of the following American systems: the MX, the Midgetman, the Trident D-5, the advanced technology (Stealth) bomber
- a ban on long-range cruise missiles (over 600 kilometres) which would prohibit both the present deployments of the advanced cruise missile (ACM), as well, presumably, as long-range sea-launched cruise missiles.

In certain important respects, therefore, this proposal directly addressed US concerns about the expansion of strategic forces and the lethality of Soviet SS-18 land-based ICBMs. Particularly the Soviets accepted, apparently for the first time, deep reductions in both launchers and warheads, and thus appeared to come close to the US position, the more so since they were willing also to impose a sub-ceiling on land-based ICBM warheads.

However, the Soviet proposal also contained elements which were certain to be opposed by the US, particularly since several had already been rejected in previous negotiations. Amongst these, the definition of

**Strategic Offensive Forces — Negotiating Positions Since 1980**

| | |
|---|---|
| **June 1982 START** | Reagan proposes reduction of strategic warheads to 5,000, no more than 2,500 on ICBMs. Soviets seek lesser cuts and retention of most land-based ICBMs |
| **December 1983** | Talks broken off |
| **March 1985 NST** | Talks resume, little change in positions |
| **September 1985** | Soviet proposal for deep reduction down to 6,000 nuclear charges but includes INF and intercontinental forces in single package |
| **October 1985** | US counter-proposal for deep reductions calls for warhead ceiling of 4,500 with continued emphasis on ICBMs; treats INF as separate issue, bans mobile missiles |
| **January 1986** | Gorbachev's wide-ranging proposal for nuclear and conventional disarmament includes offer to separate INF from strategic systems |
| **June 1986** | New Soviet proposal increases warhead ceiling to 8,000, drops ban on long-range ALCMs and SLCMs, and links proposal to ABM Treaty guarantee |
| **July 1986** | New US proposal increases warhead ceiling to 7,500, places additional constraints on ICBMs but allows possibility of mobile ICBMs; SLCMs not included |
| **Reykjavik October 1986** | US and Soviets agree to 50% reduction over 5-year period but disagree on next stage — Soviets seek complete elimination of all nuclear strategic weapons, US of ballistic missiles only. Soviets seek strict limits on SDI consistent with elimination of all ballistic missiles, US wants SDI deployment option as insurance. |

'strategic forces' to include intermediate-range US missiles and aircraft was perhaps the most important, and is dealt with in the following section. The ban on SDI research and development is also addressed later. Strictly in terms of strategic weapons as this term was defined in the SALT agreements,* the ban on modernization and on long-range cruise missiles had little appeal to the US, since it discriminated against current US force deployments and deployment plans for the MX missile. But, despite these serious difficulties, the core Soviet proposal on strategic weapon reductions marked a significant step toward the previous US proposal for deep reductions in strategic warheads and launchers.

The US response at the end of October 1985 was also made public, and subsequently confirmed by Paul Nitze, special adviser to the President and Secretary of State. The main elements in the American proposal were the following:

- a ballistic missile **warhead** ceiling (including those on land and submarine-based launchers) of 4,500
- a ballistic missile **launcher** ceiling (land and sea based) of 1,250, but with indications that the ceiling could be raised to 1,450
- a warhead sub-ceiling of 3,000 on ICBMs
- a throw-weight limit on strategic ballistic missiles, the effect of which is that neither side could exceed more than 50% of existing Soviet throw-weight
- a ban on mobile missiles
- a limit of 350 on heavy bombers which, on the Soviet side, apparently includes the Backfire, an airplane previously defined as medium-range, but which was claimed by the US to have a strategic (i.e. intercontinental) capability**
- a separate limit of 1,500 on air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs), with no limit on other nuclear armaments (gravity bombs and short-range attack missiles) carried by bombers
- a limit of 120 on the number of bombers allowed to carry ALCMs.

In regard to strategic weapons, therefore, the American proposal again reflected the US concern with Soviet land-based ICBMs. The determination to limit throw-weight (the combined weight of the warhead and guidance systems that the booster rocket is able to thrust into a given trajectory) indicated the US belief that the large throw-weight and increasing accuracy of the SS-18 endangered US land-based Minuteman missile forces. At the same time, the US position had changed somewhat from the earlier START position, since the sub-ceiling on land-based ICBM warheads was increased from 2,500 under START to 3,000. In effect, the gap between the US and Soviet proposals on land-based ICBMs, the single most contentious element in the negotiations on central strategic forces, was narrowed to a difference of 600 warheads between the 3,000 proposed by the US and the 3,600 by the USSR. On the surface, this appeared negotiable.

Secretary Gorbachev's dramatic proposals of 15 January 1986 did not affect the respective positions on strategic warheads. However, in his sweeping programme for disarmament, Gorbachev made explicit a shift which had already been signalled by Soviet officials, namely, the willingness to remove the INF negotiations from the discussions on strategic weapons. With this step, the complex Soviet package of October 1985 was disaggregated, leaving a negotiation on central strategic weapons which addressed the same systems and counted strategic forces in the manner which had become familiar through the SALT and START negotiations.

Despite these offers, which made more feasible an agreement on deep reductions in strategic forces, there appeared to be little movement in the subsequent rounds of the Geneva talks on central strategic systems. The major obstacle was clearly the linkage to SDI. Nonetheless, in mid-1986 both sides further modified their positions on central strategic systems. In June the Soviet Union offered an 'interim' option to be put in place before the deeper cuts previously proposed, but not to replace them. In comparison with the October proposal, and remembering that by January the Soviets had abandoned their proposal to count INF as strategic weapons, the main changes were as follows:

- a limit of 1,600 on strategic launchers including bombers, thus approximating the previous US proposal (1,250 missile launchers and 350 bombers)
- an increase in the number of 'nuclear charges' (essentially including gravity bombs as well as warheads) from 6,000 to 8,000
- an increase from 3,600 to 4,800 in the sub-ceiling of warheads deployed on any single leg of the triad as a consequence of the increase in total warheads to 8,000 (but thereby maintaining the ratio at 60%)
- the inclusion of submarine-launched cruise missiles in the 8,000 total, accompanied by a ban on surface ship SLCMs (presumably because the difficulties of verifying ship-borne SLCMs made a total ban more

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* The SALT negotiators defined 'strategic' as weapons with a range exceeding 5,500 kilometres.

**On 16 June 1979, at the time of the signing of the SALT II Agreement, President Brezhnev gave President Carter a written statement noting that the Backfire is a medium-range bomber. "[The Soviet Union] does not intend to give this airplane the capability of operating at intercontinental distances." In effect, this precluded deployment at certain Soviet bases which might otherwise permit an intercontinental radius of action.

feasible than a quota)
- a freeze on the number of US bombers deployed in Europe and on aircraft carriers, in exchange for which the Soviets agreed not to include these forces in the strategic count
- a mutual pledge not to withdraw from the ABM Treaty for 15-20 years.

In this new exchange several departures from previous negotiating positions are noteworthy. On the Soviet side, the June proposal abandoned the initial attempt to ban all long-range (over 600 km) cruise missiles. The increased ceiling on nuclear charges (8,000) now included both ALCMs and, importantly, submarine-launched cruise missiles. Since the US is committed to the ALCM programme, the Soviet concession on this point was perhaps inevitable. With regard to SLCMs, however, the Soviet position opened a new area of discussion. SLCMs had not figured at all in the US proposal, and only generally (as 'nuclear charges') in the October 1985 Soviet proposal. As a weapon with strategic potential entirely unrestrained by the SALT negotiations (in contrast to the ALCMs, which in SALT II are included in the ceilings for MIRVed launchers), SLCMs offer the opportunity for rapid expansion of the superpower arsenals, and also pose severe problems of verification should they be included in an arms control agreement. By including submarine- but not ship-launched SLCMs, the Soviets offered a first approach to restraining that part of the SLCM development most amenable to existing techniques of verification.

The US response came in August 1986; it was not officially announced but was reliably reported in the US press. In comparison with the November proposal, the major changes were as follows:

- an increase in the warhead ceiling to 7,500, with no more than 5,500 on ballistic missiles and 2,000 on ALCMs
- a ceiling of 1,600 on all nuclear delivery systems, including a sub-ceiling of 350 heavy bombers
- a limit of 3,300 ( up from 3,000) on land-based ICBM warheads
- an acceptance of mobile ICBMs, subject to satisfactory negotiations on verification procedures.
- a limit of 50% of land-based warheads on SS-18s, on missiles with more than 6 warheads, and on long-range mobile missiles (in the Soviet case, the SS-24 and SS-25).

It will be noted that the proposal did not address the issues of SLCMs, which, in the US scheme, still remain outside the negotiations. While approaching the Soviet figures in terms of overall warheads and the land-based sub-ceiling, the US negotiating position once again reflected its concern with counterforce-capable Soviet ICBMs: the land-based sub-ceiling (50% of 3,300) was aimed directly at the most modern Soviet ICBMs, particularly the SS-18, but also the new SS-24s, each of which is thought to carry 10 warheads. From the US viewpoint, acceptance of the sub-ceiling would possibly eliminate the Soviet capability to double-target all US missile silos with highly accurate warheads; from the Soviet viewpoint, however, it was unlikely to be accepted since it cut into the most modern part of the Soviet strategic forces while leaving intact the most accurate US forces (the land-based MX and the Trident D-5 SLBM).

On mobile missiles, there was a clear shift in the US position. Since the Soviets had begun deployment of the SS-25s, the proposed ban on mobility could hardly have been appealing to the Soviet negotiators. However, following the proposed ban on mobility in its November 1985 package, the Reagan Administration came under severe pressure, particularly from Congress, which continued to assert strong support for the Midgetman, a terrain-mobile small missile considered by many to be the solution to the problem of ICBM vulnerability. While conditioned by the insistence on verification, therefore, the US response offered the possibility of a compromise on the issue of mobile ICBMs.

*Reykjavik*

The discussions at Reykjavik must be treated with care since some ambiguity persists about the precise nature of the proposals made. In the case of strategic forces, however, attention focussed initially on an agreement to reduce all strategic forces by approximately 50% over a five-year period to an equal level of 1,600 delivery vehicles and 6,000 warheads. Soviet statements indicate that Gorbachev proposed an across-the-board reduction of forces "taking into account the historically-formed features of the parties' strategic forces," while US statements emphasized the need for a specific ceiling on Soviet ICBMs.

Thereafter, there was a major difference of opinion. US spokesmen claim that, in the second five-year phase, only ballistic missiles would be further reduced to zero. Soviet statements, supported in part by released segments of the discussions in which Reagan spoke of 'nuclear weapons', claim that, in the second phase, all strategic nuclear delivery systems were to be eliminated. Subsequent assessments clearly indicate that the Reykjavik discussions became more confused and, on the US side, more unplanned as this subject unfolded. In particular, as subsequent comment indicated, the proposal to eliminate all ballistic missiles in a ten-year time frame had been approved neither by the NATO allies nor by the Joint Chiefs of Staffs, and has since dropped quietly off the arms control agenda of the United States.

However, at Reykjavik both the complete elimi-

nation of nuclear weapons and, more particularly, the elimination of ballistic missiles, were linked to the maintenance of the ABM Treaty for a ten-year period, as discussed below in Section III.

## II. INTERMEDIATE NUCLEAR FORCES (INF)

*Introduction*

It was suggested earlier that in SALT I the Soviets wished to count, within the 'strategic' balance, all systems which could attack the homeland of the other side. Specifically, they had in mind US land and carrier-based nuclear-capable aircraft in and around Europe, US submarines on patrol in European waters, and the British and French nuclear forces. The US resisted this interpretation, and won Soviet agreement for a definition of 'strategic' as intercontinental missiles with a range of over 5,500 kilometres. The intermediate-range missiles and bombers thus excluded from the strategic negotiations were to be left to the third stage of the SALT negotiations.

Within the Western alliance, this deferral was no doubt regretted in 1977, when the Soviets began to replace their SS-4s and -5s with SS-20s. The SS-4s and -5s are older missiles which lack mobility and are highly vulnerable. Their range of 2,000 km or less restricts their targets to areas in West Germany. The mobile SS-20, with a range of 5,000 km, is a qualitatively superior weapon which can cover targets in most of Western Europe. Its deployment persuaded leading European NATO members that the balance of nuclear forces in Europe had been changed for the worse. Hence the decision was made to deploy the cruise and Pershing II missiles, unless the Soviets could be persuaded to dismantle the SS-20s, SS-4s and SS-5s. This was the position proposed by Reagan in November 1981, known as the 'zero option'.

**Table 2 Intermediate-Range Missile Forces* Under Discussion at Geneva**

| Soviet Union | Missiles | Range (km) | Warheads | Total Warheads |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SS-20s (Europe) | 243** | 5,000 | 3 | 729 |
| SS-20s (Asia) | 171 | 5,000 | 3 | 513 |
| SS-4s | 112 | 2,000 | 1 | 112 |
| **United States** | | | | |
| GLCMs | 52 | 2,500 | 4 | 208 |
| Pershing IIs | 108 | 1,800 | 1 | 108 |

* The table does not include aircraft, US submarine-based missiles or British and French forces since these have not been central to the respective proposals. It also does not include missiles such as the SS-22, SS-23 and Pershing I which have ranges under 1,000 km.

** The US claims that the Soviet Union has 270, the difference being those which have been withdrawn but allegedly not destroyed.

When Soviet and American negotiators finally met in Geneva, in 1981 and 1982, there was little agreement about the nuclear systems to be included in the negotiations. Proposals and counter-proposals were made, including the famous 'walk in the woods', when Ambassadors Nitze and Kvitsinsky discussed a formula which placed limits on intermediate-range aircraft (the US F-111, the Soviet Backfire, Badger and Blinder), and on intermediate-range missile **launchers** (in Europe, 75 SS-20s, and 75 GLCM launchers, no Pershing IIs). The talks finally broke-off in 1983 when, as threatened, the Soviet delegation walked out in protest against the initial deployment of the GLCMs and Pershing IIs.

*Soviet Proposals*

In their opening position of 30 September 1985, the Soviets reverted to their preferred definition of 'strategic'. Their comprehensive proposal was based on the following logic. Under US 'strategic' systems, the Soviets listed all US carrier, submarine and land-based nuclear-capable launchers in and around Europe which could reach the Soviet Union. They did not include the SS-20s or other Soviet medium-range aircraft on the grounds that these could not normally reach the continental United States. The Soviets then proposed a 50% reduction from the aggregate of these systems. Effectively, this placed the US in the situation where it was required to choose between the retention of its 'strategic' forces and its European-based nuclear systems deployed in support of NATO. As in SALT I, the US rejected this approach.

However, early in November, prior to the Geneva summit meeting between Reagan and Gorbachev, the Soviets indicated that they were willing to forego their preferred definition of 'strategic', and to negotiate an INF agreement independent of other proposals in the strategic arms discussions. Furthermore, the Soviets conveyed the impression, later made explicit in an exchange between Gorbachev and Senator Edward Kennedy, that an INF agreement was **not** linked to an agreement about the limits of SDI research. Parallel to this development, in a visit to Paris, Mr. Gorbachev also invited the French and British to a 'direct dialogue' on Soviet, British and French forces in Europe, implying that these forces also need not be included in Soviet-US force reductions.

In his 15 January 1986 speech, Mr. Gorbachev set down the basic Soviet negotiating position on INF. Confirming the decoupling of an INF agreement from

reductions in strategic weapons, Gorbachev indicated again that an INF agreement need not include British and French nuclear forces. However, there were conditions attached to this proposal. The first was that the US agree not to transfer INF systems to the British and French. Subsequently, Soviet spokesmen have made it clear that the 'no-transfer' condition includes not only Pershing II and cruise missiles, but also the Trident D-5, which the US has agreed to provide to the British, and which is the planned centrepiece of British nuclear modernization.

The second Soviet condition was that, in the period when the USSR and the US are reducing their INF deployments, the British and French agree not to 'build up' their forces.

The Soviets have not equated 'build up' with 'modernize' and have not stated what increases in British and French forces would constitute an unacceptable 'build up'.

Third, the Soviet proposal required the British and French to participate at a later date in the over-all reduction of nuclear weapons. In subsequent clarification, Soviet spokesmen have noted that this is an explicit recognition of longstanding British and French policy. Both have claimed that the disparity between their own 'minimal deterrent' forces and those of the superpowers is such that only after major reductions in the superpower arsenals is it reasonable to suppose that they could join in proportionate, or pro-rated, reductions. The Soviet proposal ostensibly recognizes this claim, and requires British and French participation only after major reductions by the US and the Soviet Union.

*The US Response*

Having rejected the initial Soviet proposal to count European-based American forces as 'strategic', the US response focussed on the trade-off between US intermediate-range missiles (the Pershing IIs and GLCMs) and Soviet SS-20s. Specifically, therefore, the US rejected the inclusion of nuclear-capable aircraft and submarines stationed in and around Europe. It also continued to insist that it cannot negotiate on behalf of the British and French, and that their forces cannot be included in a Soviet-US agreement on INF.

Second, the US response stressed the linkage between Euro-limits on INF missiles and 'global' limits. There appeared to be two main factors behind this. The first was the US view that mobile SS-20s based in Soviet Asia, either covertly or in time of crisis, could be targeted on Western Europe. (The Soviets have responded to this claim by noting that the Asian-based SS-20s are to counter US deployments in the Pacific, and that in any case it would be just as easy for the US to transport GLCMs and Pershing IIs from North America to Europe in time of crisis.)

**Intermediate Nuclear Forces: Negotiating Positions Since 1980**

| | |
|---|---|
| **November 1981** | Reagan offers 'zero option': no GLCMs and PIIs if Soviets dismantle SS-20s |
| **July 1982** | 'Walk in the woods' proposes limit of 225 on intermediate-range forces, sublimit of 75 on European-based SS-20 launchers, GLCM launchers, and no Pershing IIs |
| **September 1985** | Soviet package proposal includes all US INF, but not SS-20s or Soviet intermediate-range aircraft |
| **November 1985** | Indication that Soviets will negotiate INF separately with no necessary link to SDI |
| **January 1986** | Gorbachev confirms INF agreement can be separate, need not include British and French forces, but requires agreement that British and French not build up their forces |
| **February 1986** | US seeks to include Asia-based SS-20s, calls for 'global' INF limits, offers options which include low ceilings on Euro-based missiles |
| **Reykjavik October 1986** | Prior expectation that agreement would allow each side to retain 200 INF warheads (100 each in Europe) but discussion proposed zero INF in Europe with each retaining 100 warheads on national territory |
| **Post Reykjavik** | Soviets no longer willing to reach INF agreement separate from SDI and strategic force reductions |
| **February 1987** | Soviets again propose zero INF in Europe with each retaining 100 warheads on national territory |

The second influence on the Reagan Administration was the attitude of Japan, and possibly other Asian allies. In the round of consultation with allies that preceded the US response to Gorbachev, Japan firmly objected to the negotiation of an INF reduction in Europe which placed no constraints on deployments in Asia, and which might even, indeed, encourage such deployments.

Despite these reservations, in early 1986, an INF agreement was clearly attractive to the United States. In addition to resolving the question of how to define 'strategic', the Soviet offer had conceded two major points to Washington: the exclusion of British and French forces, and the restriction of a prospective agreement to intermediate-range missiles.

Further, the Soviet willingness to decouple the INF agreement from the debate over permissible research on SDI offered an opportunity for an early arms control agreement. This in itself was thought sufficient to assure the success of a second summit meeting between Reagan and Gorbachev.

In February 1986, therefore, President Reagan made a counter-offer which effectively offered three options: (1) *the elimination of Euro-based* SS-20s, GLCMs and Pershing IIs over three years with 'proportionate' reductions in the Soviet SS-20s based in Asia; (2) a phased *reduction from global limits* on the same systems, including, presumably, missiles stored in the United States; and (3) a *reduction of the Euro-missiles to lower ceilings* with proportionate reductions in the Asian-based SS-20s.

The last of these options reflected a further difficulty for the US in its attempt to negotiate on behalf of its allies. Whereas Japan had objected to an arrangement which appeared to ignore Japanese security concerns, the European allies continued to express serious doubts about an arms control agreement which would entirely remove the GLCMs and Pershing IIs from Europe. Unofficially, two reasons were cited. One concerned public perceptions: what would be the reaction to the removal of missiles that had just been installed after a prolonged and divisive public debate in most of the NATO countries involved? The other, perhaps more important in the long term, was the view that US INF missiles were necessary to maintain the credibility of the US nuclear guarantee to its NATO allies.

The third US option — to reduce but not eliminate the GLCMs and Pershing IIs — was clearly designed to meet these European concerns. Prior to the Reykjavik summit, it appeared that the Soviets had accepted this position. Their offer, as reported, seemed to meet European interests, since it allowed each side to retain 200 INF warheads: in the Soviet case, 100 in the European zone and 100 in Soviet Asia; in the US case, 100 in Europe and 100 in the United States. However, surprisingly perhaps, the Reykjavik discussions centred on the proposal to remove **all** medium-range warheads from Europe, leaving only 100 in Soviet Asia and 100 in the US.

At Reykjavik the discussion implied the decoupling of INF from the question of strategic forces and SDI, but in post-Reykjavik comments it became clear that this was no longer the Soviet position. After several months of unproductive negotiations in Geneva, on 28 February 1987 Gorbachev renewed the offer to disconnect INF from the debate surrounding the SDI. Essentially, the Reykjavik proposal (no SS-20s, Pershing IIs or cruise missiles in Europe, 100 warheads to be retained in Soviet Asia and the United States) has emerged as the mutually accepted position of the superpowers, but with certain continuing constraints. The first is the continued reluctance of the European NATO countries, in particular West Germany, to accept what they perceive to be the nuclear 'de-coupling' of Europe and the United States which might result from an INF agreement. The second is the Soviet short-range INF (SRINF) (see Table 3), on which the Soviet position has wavered. However, the Gorbachev offer to Secretary of State Shultz on 14 April 1987 offers the strong prospect that the removal and possible dismantlement of the short-range SS-12s, SS-22s and SS-23s will be explicitly linked to an agreement on INF. If so, proposals to eliminate SRINF will bring into focus the debate about the conventional force balance in Europe.

**Table 3** **Short-range Nuclear Forces (500-1000 km)**

*(Global)*

| **United States** | **Range (km)** | **Missiles** | **Warheads** | **Total Warheads** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pershing Ia | 720 | 72 | 1 | 72 |
| **Soviet Union** | | | | |
| SS-12/SS-22 | 900 | 110-120 | 1 | 110-120 |
| SS-23 | 500 | 20+? | 1 | 20+? |

**Sources:** Arms Control Association; IISS, *The Military Balance 1986-87;* US Department of Defence, *Soviet Military Power,* 1987.

## III. DEFENCE AND SPACE ARMS

Technically, the negotiations at Geneva in this area can include issues other than those directly relating to SDI. Specifically, anti-satellite and anti-tactical ballistic missiles (ATBMs), which are claimed by both sides to be compatible with the ABM Treaty, may be included in the discussions. In the US, for example, research into ATBMs is now under the auspices of the SDI office; since the ABM Treaty prohibits the transfer of systems or components to other states, the potential application of SDI research to the NATO theatre will certainly be challenged by the Soviet Union. At present, however, the central issues are:

a) the limits of permissible research under the ABM Treaty

b) the relative merits of abandonment, amendment, or continued maintenance of the Treaty in its present form, and
c) the linkage between the prospective deployment of ABM defences and reductions in strategic offensive forces.

*The Limits of Permissible Research*

In the ABM Treaty itself, 'research' is not mentioned and 'development' is not explicitly defined. Prior to the SDI, there was a commonly accepted understanding which by implication defined development in relation to research and deployment. In the United States, this view was based on the 1972 Senate testimony of US negotiators, who, during the ratification hearings, suggested that development involves the field-testing of some part of an ABM system. In contrast, research involves the pursuit of theoretical knowledge, conceptual design and laboratory (as opposed to field) testing. This distinction roughly corresponds to the distinctions made by the Pentagon for budgetary purposes, and is compatible with the negotiations on the ABM Treaty, since testimony here indicated that laboratory research was considered acceptable if for no other reason than that it could not be verified by national technical means.

More recently, statements by Secretary Weinberger and other US officials indicate that field tests are contemplated under the SDI programme which are construed to be compatible with the ABM Treaty. Since Article IV of the Treaty permits development and testing of ABM systems at specified test sites (by implication to allow each side to deploy and maintain the limited ABM capabilities permitted by the Treaty), ground-based, single-shot ABM interceptors with associated radars may be tested within the terms of the Treaty. The SDI places considerable importance on these systems, primarily as a last-ditch defence of specific assets such as missile silos or command sites, but such programmes are only one element of the SDI, which, if successful, would rely heavily on air-based and space-based systems currently prohibited by the Treaty. In Congressional testimony, for example, General Abrahamson, the head of the SDI Organization, has acknowledged that certain developments, such as the airborne optical adjunct, cannot proceed far without testing, which would appear to involve a departure from the terms of the Treaty.

More generally, relying on a technical and controversial interpretation of the Treaty, members of the Reagan Administration have argued that the research and development of 'exotic' technologies (such as space-based lasers and particle-beam weapons) are excluded entirely from the Treaty. In an early authoritative public statement on this matter, Ambassador Nitze asserted that although this 'broad' interpretation of the Treaty is correct according to the negotiating record, the Administration will abide by the 'strict' interpretation (which would construe such exotic technologies as a breakout from the Treaty) until further notice. However, more recent statements by Secretary of Defense Weinberger and others indicate that the Administration now regards the broad interpretation as the official US position, describing it as the 'legally correct interpretation' of the Treaty.

After the initiation of the SDI programme, the Soviets appeared to be suggesting a ban on all SDI research. However, subsequent statements, including some made since Reykjavik, indicate that the Soviets accept research on condition that it is not 'goal-oriented'. Although there were no public explanations of the operational meaning of this statement, it is clearly reminiscent of the distinction between laboratory research and field testing discussed above. However, it must be added that, in the aftermath of the ABM Treaty negotiations, there appears to be no official Soviet statement confirming this distinction as it was explained to the Senate in 1972 by US negotiators. More recently, however, the Soviets have appeared willing to negotiate an operational definition of research. This would include permissible activities in laboratories, factories and test ranges, and possibly involve certain sub-component tests outside those designated areas. Similar proposals have been made by specialists in the United States but not, to date, by spokesmen for the Administration.

*The Maintenance of the ABM Treaty*

Most Soviet statements have implied that their preference is to continue the ABM Treaty without amendment, which is to say that it is of unlimited duration, but subject to review every five years, and with six months' notice of withdrawal should "extraordinary events" so dictate. However, in June 1986 Secretary Gorbachev suggested in a letter to President Reagan that the Treaty be affirmed for a

**Proposals to Guarantee the ABM Treaty**

| | |
|---|---|
| **June 1986** | Gorbachev suggests 15-20 year guarantee with linkage to deep reductions in nuclear forces |
| **July 1986** | Reagan proposes 5-year guarantee plus 2 1/2 years of no deployment |
| **Reykjavik** | Both sides support 10-year guarantee, but dispute continues about permissible research and linkage during same period to elimination of ICBMs |

period of 15-20 years, and that the confirmation be linked to an agreement to make deep reductions in offensive nuclear forces.

Within the Reagan Administration, continued maintenance of the Treaty has been a deeply contentious issue. In July 1986 Reagan responded to the Gorbachev letter by suggesting that the Treaty be confirmed for five years, and that both parties undertake thereafter not to deploy an ABM system for a period of 2 years. Since there is a six-month withdrawal clause in the Treaty, the President effectively offered a 7 1/2-year guarantee, but with no commitment thereafter. The proposal left open the question of permitted research.

At Reykjavik the two sides discussed a 10-year guarantee of the Treaty, apparently with some agreement, but the proposal failed when considered in relation to permissible research and the freedom to deploy ABM defences at the end of the ten-year period. Although both sides claim to have offered the 10-year compromise, in the case of the Soviets it was specifically linked to the parallel elimination of all strategic ballistic missiles. As was noted earlier, US support for such complete elimination has declined in the aftermath of Reykjavik, thus leaving indeterminate the question of agreement on a guaranteed duration.

*The Linkage Between ABM Defences and Strategic Offensive Forces*

In general, the US position on this matter is that deep reductions in offensive forces accompanied by the deployment of strategic defences are desirable and negotiable. The Soviet position is that the development and deployment of strategic defences is incompatible with deep reductions since the logical counter to the US deployment of ABM defences is to increase offensive forces. It should also be acknowledged that this is the unequivocal position of several former US negotiators and officials, including Robert McNamara, Paul Warnke and Gerard Smith.

It will be noted that, prior to Reykjavik, US proposals called for reductions in the major elements of strategic forces, not for their elimination. To project from the US position, in 1995 each side might hold 6,000 warheads; the US might have a partially deployed defence against ballistic missiles with a parallel defence (unconstrained by any present agreement or treaty) against bombers and cruise missiles. The purpose of the ABM defence would be to 'devalue' offensive missiles such that the opponent would have little incentive to continue to build them. The question whether, at that point, the opponent would be induced to accept further restrictions on offensive forces, or to seek alternative means of delivering nuclear warheads, is left open.

The US position is that the elimination of the threat from intercontinental ballistic missiles would in itself be a major contribution to stability. Faced at Reykjavik with the argument that there would be no need for defences if ballistic missiles were eliminated by mutual agreement, President Reagan and his advisers responded that strategic defences would be necessary to protect against accident, cheating, and the unpredictable behaviour of third parties.

By contrast, the Soviets see arms reductions and the ABM Treaty as part of an 'organic package'. At Reykjavik the maintenance of the ABM Treaty was linked to the elimination and then abolition of strategic weapons to coincide with the ten-year period of guarantee of the Treaty. Logically, without ballistic missiles there is no need for a Treaty prohibiting defences against them.

In a less visionary context, there appear to be two major Soviet concerns. The first, given the US advantage in certain critical areas of BMD, is the need to counter US defences with more complex offensive missiles. Since this would involve trading-off warheads for penetration aids, the greater the need to devise offensive counter-measures, the less the incentive to give up either numbers or throw-weight in the ICBM force. Second, the Soviets appear concerned about the development of 'space arms' as offensive weapons. It is perhaps no coincidence, therefore, that in Geneva the group dealing with defence and space arms is referred to by Americans as the 'defence' group, and by the Soviets as the 'space arms' group.

*Related Issues*

There are two issues closely related to the Geneva negotiations which are not, strictly speaking, part of the talks. The first is a comprehensive test ban (CTB), the second is the question of compliance with existing treaties and agreements.

Having undertaken a unilateral moratorium on testing from August 1985 to March 1987, the Soviets sought US support for a joint moratorium as a prelude to a negotiated CTB. They have tended to identify the moratorium and an INF agreement as the two most likely short-term prospects for superpower agreement. However, the US declined to join the moratorium, and has offered a number of reasons in support of continued nuclear testing. Although the test issue remains an important one on the superpower agenda, US opposition to an immediate moratorium suggests that it is unlikely to emerge as the precursor to a major arms control agreement, and, conversely, the failure of the moratorium is unlikely to inhibit such an agreement. So much now seems clear from recent Soviet statements indicating a willingness to concentrate in the first instance on the ratification of the existing partial test ban treaties.

The issue of compliance is beyond the scope of this paper, save only to note that compliance issues have

been raised by both sides, but particularly by the US, concerning SALT I, SALT II, the ABM Treaty and the Partial Test Ban Treaty. They were cited by the Reagan Administration as a major factor in the US decision to exceed the SALT II limits in late 1986 when the 131st B-52/ALCM carrier was deployed.

## CONCLUSIONS

In all such negotiations, it is necessary to distinguish bargaining positions from movement towards substantive agreements. For example, the initial Soviet proposal of 30 September 1985 presented a package in which the definition of 'strategic' and the linkage of INF and intercontinental forces reverted to the earliest days of the impasse in the SALT negotiations. At the same time, the proposal offered major new elements, including particularly the acceptance of US views on the need for deep cuts in strategic forces. While it is important not to ignore the negotiating difficulties involved in stripping unpromising elements from the promising ones, it is nevertheless the case that the recent Geneva negotiations have produced proposals which, several years earlier, would have been seen as major advances.

On the Soviet side, there are several developments of note. First, the Soviets have declared a willingness to negotiate deep cuts in strategic forces of the kind proposed by the Reagan Administration in 1982. They have also shown willingness to accept the idea of a specific ceiling on heavy missiles such as the SS-18. Second, with some twists and turns, they have proposed an INF agreement very similar to that proposed by Reagan in 1982. Third, they have repeatedly declared a willingness to accept verification measures far more intrusive than any that were acceptable in earlier negotiations — although the test of this change of heart lies in the detailed negotiations of verification procedures.

Conversely, the United States position has been substantively unchanged from the earlier period of the Reagan Administration. On balance, the United States has been reactive in the period under review, responding with restraint, and sometimes, as in the INF proposals, appearing to have been caught off-guard by Soviet changes of position. The new element in the US position, as compared with 1982, is the commitment to SDI and the apparent willingness to forego opportunities which were earlier considered high priority (such as the deep reductions in offensive forces) when such opportunities prejudice the SDI programme.

There are indications that there could yet be an operational agreement on SDI which would allow both sides to conduct extensive research but leave the ABM Treaty intact. As with the abandonment of the SALT II limits, these indications seem to leave the future of arms control agreements evenly poised, with several possible futures. First, as the account of strategic force negotiations indicates, proposals for deep cuts in strategic offensive forces are realistic. Setting aside the linkage with SDI research, the respective positions are sufficiently close on new and lower limits that relatively little staff work would be required to produce a negotiated outcome.

Ironically, perhaps, the second future under discussion makes the accomplishment of important but limited reductions pale into insignificance. As the convulsive effort at Reykjavik indicated, the total elimination of nuclear weapons continues to be a major theme in superpower discussions. While it is too soon to judge the persistence and commitment of the respective leaders to this vision, it might be noted that it has only a tenuous connection to the detailed negotiations in Geneva. In brief, the elimination of all ballistic missiles in ten years, or of all nuclear weapons before the turn of the century, would require a quite different preparation from that which is involved in limited cuts, or an INF agreement. Negotiations at Geneva have focussed on the latter proposals, not the former.

Finally, the compliance issues and the abandonment of SALT ceilings suggest a third plausible future, which is simply that there will be no major agreements to take the place of SALT II, and the nuclear arsenals will be determined by unilateral decisions and tacit agreement. Although the prospects for an agreement on INF still seem promising, Gorbachev has also indicated that an INF accord should be accompanied by a statement of principles on disarmament issues involving SDI. On these broader issues, the United States and the Soviet Union are still very far apart.

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